



# Volunteers & Service Quarterly

WORKING TOGETHER, PRESERVING THE PUBLIC LANDS LEGACY

Volume 1, Issue 2

July 2012

## Forest Service Celebrates the 40th Anniversary of the Volunteers in the National Forests Act



Mr. Joel Starr and Nancy Coyote at Mt. St. Helens

May 18, 2012 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Volunteers in the National Forests Act. The act authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to recruit, train, and accept without regard to the civil service classification laws, rules, or regulations the services of individuals without compensation as volunteers for or in aid of interpretive functions, visitor services, conversation measures and development, or other activities in and related to areas administered by the Secretary through the Forest Service. **Since 1972, 2.5 million volunteers have contributed over 100 million hours of service valued at \$1.2 billion helping to care for the land and serve people.**

This momentous milestone is being celebrated on forests and ranger districts throughout 2012. On May 18, 2012, the actual anniversary of the Act, two events on the East and West Coasts commemorated this event by celebrating volunteers. The West Coast event coincided with the eruption of Mt. St. Helens and was held at that national monument. The East Coast event was held at the Whitten Plaza and featured a ceremony that recognized volunteers and partners. The Chief and Leslie Weldon, the Deputy Chief, National Forest System, made special presentations to volunteers and partners.

The Forest Service is deeply indebted to its volunteers and partners. We accomplish our mission to care for the land and serve people every day single day because of the citizen stewardship of millions of individuals. Thank you!



The Heritage Team of the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest accepting an award from the Chief.



Ms. Shirley Williams and Mr. Humberto Sanchez accept awards from the Chief.

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## A STITCH INTIME



*"This program is important in establishing place-based learning objectives, especially in a region that has such a rich history,"*  
-Eraina Nossa, VISTA



*Partners included the University of Illinois, AmeriCorps VISTA, Forest Service and the communities of Cairo and Paducah!*



## A Stitch in Time: Shawnee National Forest Connects Students to Local Heritage



Students make their own block for a quilt.

In celebration of African American History Month, two AmeriCorps VISTAs, working with the Shawnee National Forest and University of Illinois Extension Office, organized a heritage celebration and art program with students at Cairo Elementary School. The two-day event took place at Cairo Elementary and included students from first through sixth grades.

"The purpose of the program was to teach students about complex concepts such as slavery, as well as highlight the unique and important role of southern Illinois history prior to and during the Civil War," said Elizabeth Dorgay, an AmeriCorps VISTA and one of the main organizers. Dorgay and fellow VISTA team member, Eraina Nossa met with school teachers and the principal to discuss the program. All partners were excited about the opportunity to offer this program to the students of Cairo Elementary. "I think this program is important in establishing place-based learning objectives, especially in a region that has such a rich history," said Nossa, "... our goal is to help build a connection between youth and the area they live in" she added.

The program had help from Forest Service and regional community members. Activities included living history re-enactments and engaging, curriculum based lessons that not only focused on southern Illinois history but also aligned to state teaching standards. Following the completion of these activities, the students returned to their classrooms and worked together to make quilt blocks to showcase what they learned in their classrooms through the use of various symbols and shapes. Each classroom designed and created a block to be assembled into a 12-block quilt by volunteers from Cairo and Paducah. The quilt was presented to the school at the African American History Month program sponsored by the drama club. It is on display in the school as a reminder of what the students learned and to promote pride in their local community and history.

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## VPReports: 2012 Data Input Available Soon!

Changes and upgrades to VPReports are in the final stages of completion. The WO is working with the Chief Information Office to complete testing of the changes and upgrades. The application should be up and running by the end of July and open for 2012 data input.

## Voluntourism Feasibility Study Underway

In collaboration with Interpretive Services, Volunteers & Service has established a partnership with Sustainable Travel International to conduct a feasibility study and establish the business case for implementing the recently completed Strategic Plan for the Volunteers and Service Program. The work targets strategic goal IV. Sustainable Stewardship in regard to implementing outreach strategies that will result in expanded participation of communities and underserved participants. For more information about Voluntourism please visit <http://voluntourism.org/>. A new edition of Volunteer Vacations: Short Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others features PIT and PCTA Voluntourism projects.

## 2012 YCC Crew Builds Accessible Walkways



YCC participants build a wheelchair accessible walkway in the MarkTwain NF.

Every summer about 1,000 youth take jobs on youth conservation corps crews. On the Mark Twain National Forest, a crew of three YCC members helped to make a walkway to a boat landing accessible.

The existing walkway to the restroom at the Enough Boat Launch was made from gravel and had deteriorated to the point to where it was not wheelchair accessible. A small bag of concrete was sufficient for the installation of a more permanent sidewalk. The goals of this program were twofold: build a low cost, low maintenance wheelchair accessible walkway; and teach the YCC crew valuable “hands on” skills.

Prior to the start of work, the crew was given a tailgate safety briefing to emphasize that getting the job done safely is always the primary objective. The project was supervised by intern Andrew Greenwell while Lisa Essmyer and Bill Andersen provided technical direction. All three of the crewmembers had previous concrete experience, which meant the job went very smoothly and was completed in just one day!

## Iron Furnace Passport In Time Project



Iron Furnace

A recent Passport in Time (PIT) archaeology project on the Shawnee National Forest (NF) allowed both Forest personnel and volunteers from the public to experience a connection to the past like none other. Shawnee NF archaeologists Mary McCorvie and Heather Carey, along with AmeriCorps VISTA team member Eraina Nossa, worked with 23 volunteers from across the country during the weeklong PIT project.

The furnace was in intermittent operation from 1838 to 1880. Shovel testing on the forested ridge tops yielded important discoveries including an early-to-mid-nineteenth century home place with cistern and cellar, and a large site occupied by prehistoric Native Americans during the Late Archaic/Early Woodland period, as indicated by the recovery of an Adena point (3,000 – 1100 B.P.).

By the end of the project, 140 acres had been completely inventoried for heritage resources. Additional finds included a cemetery thought to be associated with the Illinois Iron Furnace village, the remains of a half-dovetail log house, and a number of iron prospecting/mining pits.

The volunteers enjoyed the variety of work they were offered, which included using a compass to walk in transects through the woods, digging and screening for artifacts, producing scaled maps of new archaeological sites, and exploring a variety of land forms in the area. All this activity gives the Forest Heritage Program a much more accurate picture of not only life at the Illinois Iron Furnace, but also contributes new information about the prehistoric Native American occupants as well.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July 13, 2012

Take Pride in America National Awards Nominations Due

### July 26

VolServ Coordinators Conference Call

### August 16

Quarterly All Hands Webinar: Volunteer.gov

### August 17

Take Pride in America Federal Lands Manager Award Nominations Due

### August 23

VolServ Coordinators Conference Call

### September 22

National Public Lands Day

### September 27

VolServ Coordinators Conference Call

### October 20

Make a Difference Day

### October 27

VolServ Coordinators Conference Call

### November 5-7

Proposed dates of National Volunteers & Service Workshop

### November 10

FY 2012 VPR reports data input concludes

### November 15

Quarterly All Hands Webinar: Capacity Building Partnerships

### November 19

VolServ Coordinators Conference Call

### December 10-22

The International Association for Volunteer Effort 22nd World Volunteer Conference, London, England

**2011 Carryover funds expand 2012 YCC employment opportunities.** 30 forests, including the Hawaii Experimental Tropical Forest, collectively employed 176 additional YCC members with an infusion of carryover funds. The Forest Service projects YCC enrollees will top 1,000 for the first time in many years!





*"We would look at a spider web or the ant or the bird. They paid more attention to the yard than the inside. My parents saw Chicago as being valuable. There are kids who have never caught one, never touched one...They run up with their jar and they open it up and they touch a woolly bear caterpillar for the first time." -Julie Kastel*



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is the first national tallgrass prairie and, at 19,000 acres, the largest piece of contiguous open space in northeastern Illinois. Midewin was established in 1996 on the former Joliet Arsenal. It is currently a "prairie under construction" as staff and volunteers restore the land from war plants to prairie plants.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Julie Kastel, Environmental Educator



Midewin Volunteer Julie Kastel

As youth spend more time inside and plugged in, environmental educators are answering the call to reverse the trend. Midewin volunteer Julie Kastel is helping with this effort.

Julie grew up in the heart of Chicago with a "postage-stamp" backyard and is now part of a team that brings nature into the lives of over 1,000 elementary school students each year. Her favorite activity is the fall insect hunt. "There are kids who have never caught one, never touched one...They run up with their jar and they open it up and they touch a woolly bear caterpillar for the first time."

Like many nature lovers, Julie spent time outdoors at a young age. Although she lived in a crowded urban neighborhood, her family's appreciation for nature became a major influence in adulthood. Julie says that her parents, grandmother and aunt taught her to see the smaller things in life. "We would look at a spider web or the ant or the bird. They paid more attention to the yard than the inside. My parents saw Chicago as being valuable."

Julie joined Midewin's team in 2008 as a butterfly monitor. After moving to Wilmington, she drove by the prairie and was intrigued. "I thought I would love to be a part of that one day." In the years since joining the Midewin team, Julie's easygoing enthusiasm has allowed this former city girl to connect to diverse audiences from underserved Chicago youth to kids growing up on the outskirts of northeastern Illinois' largest open area. With younger generations spending less time outdoors than their predecessors, volunteers like Julie provide a vital educational experience not only for students, but for their teachers and parents.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2011, she received an Environmental Education/ Interpretation award. Her real reward comes in teaching the next generation to appreciate the outdoors so that they will want to protect it. It's a mammoth task, but she is planting the seeds so that these children will become stewards of the environment as adults. She knows she has made an impact when she runs into past students at the grocery store, and they tell her they remember the fun they had (and lessons they learned) in the great outdoors. "I want to be part of something bigger than that postage size backyard. It's a bigger world out there."

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## Safety First, Last & Always

SAFETY is the most important consideration in our Volunteers & Service programs. Safety policy for volunteers and YCC enrollees is the same as for employees. Volunteer Agreements must address safety; Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs) provide direction on safety considerations, proper work methods, and Personal Protective Equipment for all tasks. JHAs must be attached to every agreement. Tailgate safety sessions must be held prior to each new project, for all volunteers/enrollees involved. Please note that the agency cannot impose additional requirements on volunteers beyond what would be required of employees in similar positions. Consult your unit Safety Officer if you have questions. We want ALL volunteers, enrollees, and employees to return home safely!

## 2012 Take Pride in America National Awards

Nominations for the **2012 Take Pride in America National Awards** are being accepted now! Please submit your nominations for outstanding public lands volunteers, partners and programs by July 13, 2012 at [www.TakePride.gov](http://www.TakePride.gov).

Nominations for the **National Federal Land Managers** are due August 17, 2012. Include the nominees full name, phone number(s), email address and mailing address. A brief write up outlining their accomplishments is also required. Submit National Federal Land Manager nominations that meet the following criteria to Lisa Young at [lisa\\_young@ios.doi.gov](mailto:lisa_young@ios.doi.gov) with a copy to Merlene Mazyck at [mmazyck@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmazyck@fs.fed.us). Selected awardees will be vetted through agency processes, notified by the appropriate supervisor or Director, and then contacted by the Take Pride in America office. Winners will be recognized at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. in the fall.

Nominees should promote the mission of Take Pride in America and exemplify innovated and creative approaches to using volunteers on public lands. The Take Pride in America mission is to:

- Instill in the public the importance of the appropriate use of, and appreciation for Federal, State, and local lands, facilities, and natural and cultural resources
- Encourage an attitude of stewardship and responsibility toward these lands, facilities, and resources
- Encourage individuals, organization, and communities to care for these lands, facilities, and resources through the use of a conservation ethic

Federal Land Manager Awardees will be selected based on the following factors:

- Foster an environment of stewardship over public resources
- Include, involve and engage a broad spectrum of partners, individuals and populations in volunteer activities
- Recognize and award volunteers for their commitment and service
- Promote continuous or increased volunteer service
- Address current, actual needs
- Facilitate volunteer service that directly addresses the need
- Provide ways for individuals, organizations, communities and other groups to get involved in the volunteer effort
- Find creative solutions to problems
- Understand the scope of the need and develop/carry out a projects that adequately addresses the need

## 21st Century Conservation Service Corp (21CSC)

The 21CSC Federal Advisory Committee recently presented a preliminary summary of the first four months of the Committee's work. The Committee plans to finalize a full set of recommendations by July 31, 2012 and an implementation plan by August 31, 2012 for launching and developing the 21CSC. The immediate actions are to Establish the 21CSC by October 2012 by engaging the AGO Council agencies to: 1) encourage natural resource management agencies to engage 21CSC programs to accomplish high priority work; 2) quickly identify FY 2012 year-end carryover funds where possible, FY 2013 funds, and other resources to seed and launch the initial 21CSC implementation (both operations and projects); 3) include a 21CSC presentation in the FY 2014 budget request; 4) support simplified agreement mechanisms that recognize the 21CSC's multiple benefits; 5) support an accreditation process; and 6) sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as soon as possible to establish a 21CSC National Council. For more information visit <http://www.doi.gov/21CSC/index.cfm>.

## VOLUNTEER REIMBURSEMENTS

Yes, we still do them!

Volunteers on OF-301a Volunteer Agreements can receive reimbursements for certain out-of-pocket expenses.

Reimbursements are based on actual expenses and can be different for local versus non-local volunteers and for groups. Official overnight travel is processed on GovTrip.

See FSM 1833.5 and other resource documents on <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/yvh/volunteer-resources.shtml> for guidance and the ASC MiscPay website <http://fsweb.asc.fs.fed.us/bfm/programs/financial-operations/payments/miscellaneous/> for reimbursement request instructions and forms. Official overnight travel is processed on GovTrip.

### Volunteers & Service SharePoint Site

If you are not yet a member of the Volunteers & Service SharePoint site, it isn't too late to become one. This is an information sharing site that allows us to share best practices, photographs, critical documents, policies within and among our community, and other information about our programs. Please contact Chauncey at [cdhayman@fs.fed.us](mailto:cdhayman@fs.fed.us) to become a contributing member.





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*Annually, nearly 100,000 volunteers give of their time and talents to care for the land as individual contributors or through partnerships with community based and national organizations. Forest Service volunteers and service participants include youth and young adults who are seeking experiences in the natural and cultural resources, retirees who want to spend more time in the outdoors, and unique groups that want to help. Participants contribute significantly to the accomplishment of a wide variety of mission-related work.*



## We Want Your Contributions!

This quarterly newsletter is a Volunteers & Service resource as well as a vehicle to highlight the work and volunteer accomplishments in the field and share best practices. This can only be done if each region provides content.

Please send your regional accomplishments, volunteer spotlights, photos, quotes and any other information that you think would be informative or helpful to the Volunteers & Service community at large. We want to introduce a new section titled Best Practices in the next publication but need to know what some of those are. We also value your feedback. If you have any suggestions that you think could improve the quality and effectiveness of Volunteers & Service Quarterly, please let us know. Send all submissions, questions and concerns to Chaunece Hayman at [cdhayman@fs.fed.us](mailto:cdhayman@fs.fed.us).

This newsletter has been produced by the U.S. Forest Service National Forest System Office of Recreation, Heritage & Volunteer Resources staff. Information in this publication is provided for the benefit of Volunteers & Service staff and current and future volunteers and partners.